P. 89, 93.

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

CONTENTS

THE FIRST SIX YEARS	85, 86
NOTES OF THE MONTH	87
NON-T IN THE RIDINGS (*J. Maddison*)	88, 89
BOOKS REVIEWED	89
FILMING THE EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN (*Capt. D. Bull*)	90, 91
NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS	92, 93, 94
TALES FOR CHILDREN	93
POINTS FOR DISCUSSION	94
FILM SOCIETIES	95
CORRESPONDENCE	95
OUR COUNTRY (*Dylan Thomas*)	96
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF M.O.I. FILMS	96

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September.

THE FIRST SIX YEARS

ON September 3rd the Ministry of Information will be six years old. Its sixth birthday will be a critical one, for the late Government proposed to stifle it as soon as the war with Japan had been won, and its dissolution had already begun. Brendan Bracken said many times that he thought the work of his Ministry to be a disagreeable imposition on the public only made necessary by the war situation. He even publicly insulted his own staff by saying that they joined with him in wanting to shake the dust of the M.O.I. from their shoes as soon as possible. He had no appreciation, apparently, of the permanent value of many of the services of information built up during the war; or if he appreciated their value, he feared their very success and sought to kill them all the more vigorously. Now Brendan Bracken has gone. His Ministry has survived. There are few of his staff who will not feel relieved.

The new Government will find the Ministry of Information pretty well in full working order, and will be able to consider its future at leisure. There will be time, for instance, to weigh evidence before deciding whether to keep the services of information in one department or whether the functions of the various divisions of the M.O.I. should be handed over to other government departments. Though the biggest Producer Division of all—Films Division—has no obvious home (we hope that not even the Treasury in its sillier moments would put it under the Stationery Office) there are niches for most of the others. It would be possible to transfer the Foreign Divisions to the Foreign Office. The Empire Division could be divided between the Dominions Office and the Colonial Office. The Home Division could go to the Home Office, and so on.

While the relative virtues of centralisation and decentralisation are being pondered, no doubt the achievements of the divisions themselves will be assessed. Was it good or bad that the Publications Division found itself compelled to avoid participation in the ideological fight with fascism and to concentrate on plain objective statements—and excellent many of them were—about the tactics and strategy of the war? Was it true that the Campaigns Division was weak because it was mainly controlled by Advertising Agents? Have the Regional Offices of the Home Division, in spite of some odious undemocratic traits exhibited by a minority of their officers, come to fill a place of great importance in our national life which should be perpetuated? On such points we shall express no opinion at this stage, but we feel it right here to attempt a short assessment of the work of Films Division.

First it must be noted that, unlike any other Division of the M.O.I., Films Division was not a new invention. It grew naturally out of the G.P.O. and E.M.B. Film Units, and its work must be judged against a perspective which stretches back to 1929 and which embraces not only *Target for Tonight*, *London Can Take It*, *Desert Victory*, *World of Plenty*, *Western Approaches*, *Our Country* and *The True Glory*, but also *Drifters*, *Industrial Britain*, *Night Mail*, *North Sea* and *Song of Ceylon* (made by the E.M.B. Film Unit for The Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board).

True, for a few months at the beginning of the war Films Division was headed by Sir Joseph Ball, at one time Director of the Conservative Party Research Department and in charge of films for the Conservative Central Office. Sir Joseph had as lieutenants, among others, Alderman Joseph Reeves and Oliver Bell. The only result of his stewardship seems to have been *The Lion Has Wings* which Vincent Sheehan says he saw a few months later being run as a comedy—in Berlin! When Sir Kenneth Clark became director of the division, to be followed by Jack Beddington in the Autumn of 1940, staff and administration were overhauled, and the E.M.B.-G.P.O. tradition restored. The failure of the Ball regime was because he did not, perhaps could not, realise that he was facing a public which did not require sobstuff appeals to make it fight (it had made up its mind already about this) but which was hungry for objective clear information, which the documentary school had always claimed could be given a dramatic and emotional appeal of its own. It was this new frame of mind which compelled the powers to bring out again what perhaps they hoped had been put away for good—the contentious, obstinate, unruly yet disciplined, documentary school of film makers who had been trained under Tallents and Grierson and whose pre-occupation with a world of new social values was in key with the new public temper.

From that day to this Films Division, though it has occasionally sat down in the middle of the ring with flaring nostrils like a circus horse, has on the whole moved patiently, if sometimes slowly, forward. Today, considering the record of documentary films compassing scores of masterpieces and near-masterpieces since *Drifters*, one thing is certain. The question of the comparative merits of private enterprise and public enterprise as a means of securing documentary, educational and instructional films is academic, for there has been hardly any private enterprise at all except the strange altruistic, unplanned, unbalanced and now apparently abandoned adventure of Gaumont British Instructional from about 1932 to

(*continued overleaf*)

1937. Except for G.B.I., the only operators of any importance outside the Government have followed the Government's example, and have used the film as an instrument of public education; witness the valuable contributions of Gas, Shell, Cadbury and I.C.I. If to the achievement of the British Public Services be added the film achievements of the Canadian Government since 1939, with its elaborate home theatrical and non-theatrical organisation, combined with the international circulation of *The World in Action*, the overwhelming strength of public enterprise in the documentary and educational field is proved beyond controversy. The assertions of some sections of the Film Industry that they could show up the Government's film efforts as drab and dreary claptrap, if only the Government would give them the money instead of spending it itself, merely raise a yawn.

Before analysing what must yet be done before Films Division can properly become what by rights it can and should become —that is, the foremost and most imaginative film producing and distributing agency in the world, let us briefly record some of its achievements since the outbreak of war, always remembering that the roots of many of these go deeply into the G.P.O. and E.M.B. Film Units.

Films Division took the non-theatrical distribution of the G.P.O. and developed it until it is today an essential part of the social life of the country. Its 150 projectors, distributed over twelve regions with twelve regional film officers and their related staff, have created a new taste, a new expression of citizenship which has become an essential part of our democratic life. Related to the non-theatrical scheme is the Central Film Library, the repository, not only of Government films, but of most important films, no matter what their origin, provided they carry no direct advertising. In this way, the library has become representative of all that is best in documentary whether from home or overseas sources, and it has the reputation, particularly, of being the most efficient film library in the country. In the public cinemas, there can be no doubt that the Division's notable series of feature documentaries including *Target for Tonight*, *Western Approaches* and *World of Plenty*, combined with the long series of shorter weekly and monthly films for regular theatrical distribution, have created a taste for documentary which the most stick-in-the-mud exhibitor can ignore no longer. At the beginning of the war Films Division was most sensibly made responsible for the financing and planning of productions by the Service Units, who could distribute no films to the public except under its auspices. In this way, such films as *Desert Victory* and *The True Glory*, are functions of Film Division.

Films Division has by no means concerned itself wholly with the spectacular. There has been a steady stream of less ambitious films which have been, in their way, no less finely made and no less important than the others. Such films as the series on gardening, the Civil Defence training series, which included the noteworthy *Rescue Reconnaissance*, and the innumerable descriptive films of all kinds provide a basis for future government film activity perhaps even more strongly founded than that provided by the more sensational films. In passing, the Division's newsreel trailers and "campaign" films such as *The Nose Has It* and *Go to Blazes* have put the advertising film maker in the shade—permanently, we hope —for no film advertising agency has approached the standard set by these films either in wit, aptness, or even in volume of output. (One trailer a week has been issued for about two years without a break.) Though the public Service is often supposed to be fearful of experiment, this is anything but true of the Government film set-up which, beginning with the biggest experiment of all—*Drifters*, has experimented continuously, boldly and successfully. When one looks back at *Coalface*, *We Live in Two Worlds*, *Colour-box*, *When the Pie Was Opened*, *Listen to Britain*, *Kill or be Killed*, *These are the Men*, *World of Plenty*, *Our Country*, or even that seldom projected *jeu d'esprit*, *Pett and Pott*, one realises that here is a laboratory and workshop beyond the range and imagination of any commercial enterprise.

We cannot bring this catalogue of achievement to an end without mentioning the Films Division invention of the technical film memorandum of the type of *Neuropsychiatry* and *Personnel Selection*, the experiments in combining the studio approach with documentary—*Welcome to Britain* and *Fires Were Started* for example, the huge influence of the Division on the makers of features—Launder and Gilliat directed their first film for the Division, which also financed the script of *Millions Like Us* and profoundly influenced the production of such films as *In Which We Serve* and *The Way Ahead*, the setting up of Pinewood as a combined headquarters for Crown and the Army and R.A.F. Film Units, and finally the little minute-and-a-half skit on Hitler and all that he stood for called *The Lambeth Walk*.

Such a list of splendid undertakings must not blind us to shortcomings. Though few can complain that their films have been spoiled through lack of funds, the financial administration of the Division is not its strongest point. Though the finance officers are unswervingly honest, they are also unswervingly obstinate. They know something about cash, little about economics and nothing about values. They have devised a strange, inefficient, wasteful and inflexible financial system which works neither to the advantage of the film maker nor the Government. It is valid from one point of view only; it protects the finance officers from reprimand, if their department comes under fire.

Then there is the fiasco of Bernstein's films for liberated territories, which he seems to have approached under the illusion that the new Europe will resemble a bigger and better Wardour Street. Indeed, Bernstein has revived an attitude which one had thought abandoned for good with Sir Joseph Ball.

Perhaps these things are of small importance compared with four deficiencies which Films Division suffers—lack of planning, lack of contact with the public it serves; timidity; and parochialism; deficiencies which must be overcome if the division is to reap the benefits of its wartime experience. Of these the first is to-day the least important, though earlier notes in *D.N.L.* suggest it to have been a major problem at one time. Indeed, one can say that the planning of the division's work today is greatly superior to what it was only two years ago, when the subjects to be made seemed to be chosen at random out of Harrod's catalogue. Lack of contact, timidity and parochialism persist. Films Division is full of men and women of brilliance, integrity and common sense, but they are not clairvoyant. They cannot tell what people are feeling by second sight, yet there is little or no first-hand contact. For some unexplained reason the services of the Home Intelligence Division—now partly scuppered by Bracken—have practically never been called upon, either to assess the effect of films made, or to help to determine in advance what films were necessary and desirable. Perhaps the Director of Films Division thought he knew the answers by instinct. Whatever the reason, the Director and his staff have tried to gauge public opinion and feeling vicariously through the medium of the telephone, the press, the Store Street pubs and the Savoy, just as Henry James's Daisy Miller, sitting in a village post office, tried to participate in the life of the grand people in the neighbourhood by reading the telegrams they sent. We suggest that from now on every officer of Films Division should spend one week in four out of his office and in the regions, and one month in twelve overseas, studying the life and outlook of the people to whom he wishes to speak through the medium of the film.

Films Division has been timid from the beginning of the war. It seems sometimes to have been frightened of its own public, and it has never made any films of note on trade unionism, the Co-operatives, Joint Production Committees, or any of the social organisations which are at the root of our democratic society. This defect is a great weakness of the Division, and a dozen films like *World of Plenty* or *Proud City*, neither of which deal with the mass basis of British life, will not make it good. Of course, Films Division cannot be blamed exclusively. The fear of that popular will, which organisations like the Co-ops. reflect, is deep in the minds of many Government Departments, and was therefore apparent in the policy of Films Division. We are not sure, however,

that Films Division, which must have known that its public required such films, always put up the strongest possible fight for their production.

Finally and most importantly we come to the Division's parochialism. Its films rarely take account of the world outside its own back-porch. Other countries, English as well as foreign-speaking, have cultures and traditions of their own of which they are proud. The Division often seems to assume, not only that everything British is best, but that every country recognises this as a law of creation. Thus the Division's films have sometimes had less carrying power than they should have had, and its work has often been outclassed by the international sense of the National Film Board of Canada. Surely the Division might have learnt—may yet learn—lessons from the international approach, not only of Grierson's films, but of its own most important and successful *World of Plenty*? At the present rate of going the Division may be the last organisation in the British Isles to recognise that what happens on the other side of the Channel or in the Balkans or in Spain or in Russia or in any other quarter of the world may be as important as, or even more important than, what happens at Little Ditcham-by-the-Sea. In this connection it is not fair to place the whole blame with Films Division. Documentary film units have sometimes been as parochial in outlook as the Division itself. The two sides have occasionally conspired together to pull wool over each other's eyes, and to convince each other that we would be very much better off photographing the moon—our own special British moon—through the bottom of Nat Gubbins' upturned beer mug.

Such are the strengths of Films Division. Such we conceive to be its weaknesses. But none will deny that Films Division has become a great instrument of Government. We hope that it will not only be preserved but will flourish whatever the fate of the Ministry of Information. Good luck to its Director and staff, and a long life!

NOTES OF THE MONTH

M.O.I. Output

COMPARED WITH 1943, the total cut negative footage of M.O.I. production fell in 1944 by some 26,000 feet from 175,613 feet to 120,565. The number of films issued dropped from 160 to 130. This drop was not caused by diminishing demand, for even as we write the demand for product by the M.O.I. appears to be as heavy and as urgent as at any time before. It must be accounted for in other ways. Even when allowance is made for V weapons, war weariness, and worn-out equipment (a most important factor to which too little attention is being paid by the M.O.I. and the Board of Trade) the fall remains disturbing. What are the causes other than the incidence of war? We believe they will be found, partly inside, partly outside, Films Division. Inside, we have the impression that more and more people have to be consulted before scripts can be agreed or rough-cuts accepted. Minor officials from other Government Departments seem to feel their prestige enhanced in the eyes of their masters if they can call for footling and unnecessary changes. The Finance branch of the M.O.I., never its most efficient section so far as films are concerned, seems to grow more sluggish as time goes on. Outside Films Division, we think we can sometimes detect an infinite pondering on scripts, a shovelling about of information inside a mind temporarily isolated from the practical needs of ordinary living. What one would have thought could have been finished in three weeks takes six or eight or even twelve weeks, and at the end there is sometimes little to show for what were evidently painful mental gymnastics. Above all, there is sometimes a lack of enthusiasm; films become something which must be begun—somehow, and finished—if possible. These things are, of course, only occasional (documentary would be finished if they became universal) but they are certainly present sometimes. If documentary is to take the next step they must be fought and overcome.

N.A.L.G.O.

THE RECONSTRUCTION Committee of the National Association of Local Government Officers has published a *Report on Relations between Local Government and the Community*. Realising that healthy and efficient local government depends on popular understanding, the report affirms that there are still large masses of people ignorant of, and therefore uninterested in, its methods of operation. Pressing for a policy of public relations which shall not be a one-way traffic of self praise, but a bridge between administrator and public, the report calls not only for local public relations officers, but for a National Public Relations Council, among whose duties would be the encouragement of the teaching of civics and citizenship in schools and to adults, the establishment of good relations with the press and the maintenance of a public information bureau. Inevitably the report examines the film and its proposals are cogent and far-reaching. The new Public Relations Council will seek to influence feature producers to tackle Local Government themes—*South Riding* is quoted as a happy pre-war example. Short films should be sponsored for use in schools. Recognising that Local Government has a fair claim on the Ministry of Information's non-theatrical service, which the report hopes to see extended after the war, the production of a broader type of documentary film is also suggested. Finally the report recommends the use of the film for training. An interesting suggestion is that there should be, not only broad documentary and educational films of national significance, but also smaller, less ambitious films about particular localities and problems, presumably to be made by the small production units which are now springing up under the guidance of amateur societies and local photographic dealers.

Our Country

SIGNIFICANT films opening up new horizons, devising new techniques, saying something new in a new way, are few and rare. *Our Country*—of which we reprint in this issue a section of commentary by Dylan Thomas—we believe to be such a film. Like all good poetry—film or written—experienced for the first time, it arouses strong feeling. Such works make those who hang on to cultural conventions for the comfort of their souls bruised and angry. They make those less inflexibly tied to the conventions of today and yesterday experience something so new, unexpected and exciting that at first it cannot easily be analysed. Of the powers of *Our Country* to move there can be no doubt. To some it is the most notable film of the last five years; it makes others very angry indeed. Richard Winnington in *The News Chronicle*, for instance, and Miss E. Arnot Robertson on the radio were so annoyed by it that they almost seemed to lose that detachment essential for objective criticism. On the other hand, the film Trade Press, of which the reviewers are both shrewd and hard-boiled, found the film good. *Our Country* also provokes technical argument. Some find the blending of Thomas's verse commentary with the visuals satisfying, others think the commentary unnecessary, and others again find it an impediment to the enjoyment of the film. But, whichever way one looks at it, the film leaves few unmoved, either to anger, or to pleasure, or to a disturbing mixture of the two.

Those who consider the film irredeemably highbrow should notice that it had a West End premiere, not only at the Academy Cinema but at The Empire, Leicester Square.

NON-T IN THE RIDINGS

D.N.L. has published, from time to time, articles and statistics on the general non-theatrical film activities of the Ministry of Information. Here is an impression of three years of such work in one particular area—the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire. It is contributed by John Maddison, Film Officer for the North-Eastern Region, since 1942.

PEOPLE OF a remote community in one of the high level Yorkshire Dales on the edge of the Lake District, assembled to see the first sound films ever shown in their village; some having tramped miles through the newly fallen snow to be there. . . . At midnight, in an immense underground canteen like a strange palace, three thousand aircraft workers following with northern detachment a documentary argument for the democratic way of life. . . . The School clinic of a mining town where the Medical Officer introduces films of health and immunisation to a gathering of working class mothers, many with babies in their arms. . . . The academic and the practical joining hands in the long upper room of an inn in a rural Pennine centre, as a scientific expert from a nearby University meets questionings stimulated by the showing of a film on clean milk to a group of farmers. . . . A railway institute in one of the most ancient of English cities, the setting for the pride and enthusiasm of an audience of civil engineering managements and workers witnessing film records of achievements which paved the way to the successful assault on Fortress Europe.

These and many other human and exciting memories are, one feels, sufficient reward for long and often harassing hours spent in carrying through the mobile film plan during the war years.

Here as elsewhere the scheme began modestly almost exactly five years ago. A small band of five projectionists, well equipped, but with a very small repertory of films, set out then to give shows to all kinds of voluntary organisations. The scheme has grown; there are now twelve 16 mm. units and one 35 mm. unit drawing upon a considerable library of films housed regionally. But from the beginning the basis for general informational shows has remained existing local groups, the Women's Institute, the Working Men's Club (Yorkshire is rich in these), the Townswomen's Guild, the Church Fellowship, the Adult Education Group, and the Youth Club. The secretaries of these organisations have come to look upon films as a regular element in their programmes of activities. In all this time, recurring shows have brought to such audiences a steady objective picture of a world at war. The screen in its own potent ways has sent across to them many messages, some temporary and negative, others more permanent contributions to healthy democratic thinking. The enthusiasm for these shows persists. The Secretary of one East Riding Women's Institute wrote a short time ago "The film shows are something we look forward to in this village".

Early in the scheme the need to provide a film service for industrial workers in their own canteens was recognised. The approach had to be somewhat different—the clangour and bustle of a works canteen is, for example, an unsympathetic background to the quiet and leisurely film well suited to rural audiences. Programmes must be short (they run usually for 25 minutes, and consist of one or two films) and incisive. Factory audiences have usually known a good thing when they have seen it and have shown a reassuring dislike of occasional frills and falsities. *Words and Actions* and *Crown of the Year*, to take two widely differing examples, were films appreciated by Yorkshire workers in heavy industry. As with the general evening audiences the content of programmes presented to factories has on the whole been uncompromisingly solid. A recent survey of the attitude to these monthly film shows of workers and managements in nearly 200 factories has revealed that they remain a desired part of leisure activities.

All this has not been a one-way traffic in ideas. Audience reactions have been gathered through written reports from independent organisers (received on standardised forms for at least 95 per cent of the shows given) from a great many conversations with local contacts and from periodic conferences of projectionists, at which these have told of their experiences and the reception of their programmes. Much has been learnt about techniques of distribution and presentation and a smooth working machinery has been evolved. Experience has been gained in the building up of eighty-minute programmes for general audiences. These programmes must not contain too many major themes; there must be nice alternations between argument and movement and change of scene; and the last item should be robustly conceived and impressive.

A considerable network of voluntary helpers has been created, many organising whole series of shows in their own area. The confidence and interest of these voluntary workers could only be maintained by a steadily improving standard of films available, and through their knowledge that they had a genuine stake in the working operation of the scheme. Important too has been their recognition that the Government servants with whom they were co-operating were willing

I.C.I. *Film Productions*

Imperial Chemical Industries are engaged in the production of films as visual aids in scientific education.

The following productions have been completed:

From the TECHNIQUE OF ANAESTHESIA SERIES:

Open Drop Ether
Nitrous Oxide - Oxygen - Ether Anaesthesia
Endotracheal Anaesthesia
Intravenous Anaesthesia Part 1
Spinal Anaesthesia
(Available to approved medical audiences only)

From the HEALTH OF DAIRY CATTLE SERIES:

Mastitis
Contagious Abortion
Tuberculosis

From the SCHOOL SCIENCE SERIES:

Water
Water Cycle

THIS IS COLOUR
(A Technicolor film about the British Dyestuffs industry and the nature and use of colour)

THE HARVEST SHALL COME
(A sociological film about the British agricultural worker)

With the exception of This is Colour (in 16 mm. only) these films are in 35 mm. and 16 mm. sizes. All are Sound films.

All the above are available through the Central Film Library, to which applications for loan should be made.

Other films in production will be announced when completed.

ICI

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to go to all kinds of trouble and personal inconvenience to ensure an efficient service. Drawn from local Information Committees, these contacts have included librarians and schoolmasters, municipal officers and town councillors, trade unionists and industrialists. The volume of local goodwill towards non-theatrical film engendered in this way has been vital to its success.

Film has played its part in Yorkshire in spreading specialised knowledge and skills essential in war. Its first major use was as a weapon of mass-instruction in Civil Defence, where well organised cadres of fireguards, wardens, and others studied, through non-theatrical film, anti-gas procedures, rescue techniques and methods of combating changing types of incendiary bombs. In those parts of the region relatively unmolested by the enemy, films have made a principal contribution towards maintaining keenness and efficiency. Though ready-made audiences were not there as in the case of Civil Defence, a vast amount of specialised film activity has gone on in other civilian fields. Where films have been tied closely to specific drives, as in *Blood Transfusion* and *Mass Radiography*, it is not surprising that spectacular results have been obtained in this region. Much has depended on the "film-mindedness" of officials of other Government Departments and of local authorities. The annual Dig for Victory campaigns in the West Riding have been good instances of the effectiveness of this sort of co-ordination. Gardening films have indeed been amongst the most-admired and least-criticised of official instructional films. The main criticism levelled against them has been that they have made things seem too easy—shrewdly countered by one amateur gardener's observation that this might well be because films actually did make things easier.

An interesting development in the later war years has been the series of instructional and training films for such technical and professional workers as boilerhousemen and fuel engineers, doctors and nurses. Agricultural teaching films have brought the results of expert study to the farmer and farm worker. In this region, the effective use of these films has been organised with the ready co-operation of the County Executive Committees. Each year technical officers, experts in various fields of agriculture, have assembled for a full day's conference to see new films, to appraise them and to determine the best manner of using them. On the last occasion this was followed up by written contributions which were embodied in a comprehensive document and sent *via* the Films Division in London, to the producers of the films. The main conclusions reached at this Conference were (*a*) that these instructional films were an extremely useful addition to the technical officer's equipment and that their quality was improving; (*b*) that variations in local conditions were still not taken sufficiently into account when making the films and (*c*) that methods were sometimes depicted which remained matters of controversy amongst experts. A suggestion was made that handbooks summarising the contents of the films and providing footnotes to any special procedures and locations used would go far to meet these criticisms. It may be added that, for the layman, to see films in the company of specialists is a stimulating and at times chastening experience.

One experiment made here in Yorkshire during the past eighteen months, though it falls strictly outside the scope of the present article, deserves mention. This has been a series of mass demonstrations of medical films to doctors and nurses in public cinemas. Seven of these shows, for instance, have been presented in Leeds to audiences of upwards of 1,500 at a time, and five in York to audiences of about 800 for each show. These shows have given doctors and nurses some idea of how film is being used for popular instruction in social and preventative medicine, and have indicated to them the potential usefulness of the cinema in medical teaching. The occasions have been impressive of themselves, for seldom can such large audiences of this type have met regularly together.

Looking back, certain impressions predominate. Innumerable voluntary organisations (including many possessing their own projectors and calling upon the Central Film Library) have come to look upon the regional office for guidance and advice in the use of films. One has noticed over the years the increasing maturity of the work of short film producers (compare, for instance, *Fireguard*, useful in its day, with the moving realism and fitness for purposes of *Rescue Reconnaissance*). Significant has been the growing tendency for audiences to meet together to see programmes developing a single theme in a well-balanced way. And from a personal point of view, one has come in retrospect to see all this work as a new, different, less formal but quite genuine kind of public education.

This discursive summary has provided no exact statistical analyses; the following details do, however, give some notion of the size of the total effort involved over the past five years:—

Over 20,000 shows given in village halls, schools, canteens, workshops, libraries, town halls, church halls, clinics, fire stations, first aid posts, clubs, wardens' posts, community centres and hostels, council chambers and amid the discreet luxury of a spa assembly room. Total audiences of some four million people, including industrial workers, doctors, rural workers, teachers, industrial trainees and university students, civil defence workers, nurses, agricultural discussion groupers, parents, children, stevedores, boilerhousemen, amateur gardeners and rabbit keepers, Make-do-and-Menders, and Kitchen Fronters, Bevin boys and land girls, pre-service youths and Young Farmers and all sorts of ordinary men and women. More than 500 different film subjects presented, single copies of some of these being used more than 200 times.

A team of up to twelve projectionists, backed by a small maintenance and clerical staff, has carried on this work. Four of the five original 16 mm. projectors have been in continuous use since 1940. Each has done at least 2,500 shows and been hauled, jolting, some 50,000 miles across the two Ridings from Spurn Point to Sedbergh, and from Flamborough Head to the Borders of Derbyshire. A final tribute is due to the men (and women!) and machines, who have helped to make non-theatrical film a feature of war-time life in Yorkshire.

BOOKS REVIEWED

An Index to the Creative Work of Erich von Stroheim. Herman G. Weinberg. 1943.

An Index to the Creative Work of David Wark Griffith. (Part I). Seymour Stern. 1944.

An Index to the Films of Charles Chaplin. Theodore Huff. 1945.

Special Supplements to "Sight and Sound", published by The British Film Institute.

If one had told Chaplin or Griffith in 1920 that in another twenty-five years people would be drawing up iconographies of their work and preserving it in museums they would have thought you mad. (Not so Stroheim who was self-consciously—almost too self-consciously—an "artist" with an eye to posterity). But it has happened, and Messrs. Weinberg, Stern and Huff have led the way with their carefully documented booklets. The films people used to laugh at till they rolled off their seats, the villains which they tried to boo off the screen, are now being labelled and put in show cases. In the process something has been lost and it is difficult now to conjure up the impact of comics like Chaplin and films like *The Birth of a Nation*. Today, people take their films as part of the entertainment landscape. Thirty years ago, or less, they had the effect of the epic and the popular ballad. They were the art of the people and, as such, were thought wicked and vulgar by all who prided themselves on being respectable and cultured. Today, what the story film has gained in polish it has lost in gusto. Experiment and the art of the cinema is to be found now, not usually in the entertainment film, but in the documentary film, and the documentary film makers have a way to go yet before they can command the vitality and the universatility of Griffith and Chaplin. In passing, one question to Messrs. Weinberg, Stern, Huff and the British Film Institute. If one has a bibliography one can go to a library and consult the books it lists. But if one has an iconography of films, one can go nowhere to consult the films mentioned; half of them have been lost for good. Is anyone getting round, not only to preserving such old films as remain, but to reproducing them on 16 mm. so that all can study them?

Soviet Cinema. Herbert Marshall. The Russia Today Society. 1945. 1*s*.

This is a short history of the pre-war Soviet cinema, followed by an account of the Soviet cinema during the war, with an appendix on future plans. There are useful notes on the training of film technicians, on the organisation of the Russian film industry, on the use of 16 mm., on censorship, on colour, stereoscopy and dubbing. The book would have been a deal more interesting if it had been a little more critical and a little less naïve. For example, we do not believe that the statement, "N. Doling is engaged on preliminary work for a film on biology to be called *The Law of Love*, a film demonstrating the maternal instinct, the feeling of parental loyalty in the animal world," is the happiest way to describe the plans for a new scientific film; nor do we learn much more about stereoscopy by being told that the screen is "composed of 36,000 very thin copper wires running in different directions in conformity with certain calculations". Finally, with only eight pages of illustrations, was it necessary to take up space with a portrait of the author?

FILMING THE

By Captain Donald Bull

A British Staff Officer with the Film and Photographic Section of SHAEF

FIVE and a half million feet of film, turned by 500 cameramen belonging to more than twenty different services and Government departments . . . this was the coverage and the camera force employed in the most lavishly equipped and planned photographic campaign in history. The decision of SHAEF before D-day to establish central censorship funnelled this large volume of film, in the space of one year, on to a single screen in Davies Street, and provided a unique opportunity to study side by side the methods and achievements of the units and cameramen involved.

The aim was high—to survey the whole field of coverage of the SHAEF operation, to allocate this great camera force with economy and efficiency, to secure complete recording of every phase of the operation, both front-line and rear echelon. The achievement fell short by a long way, but in its way it was great, too.

It was intended that lessons learnt in earlier campaigns—the chief one being the North African—would be applied with profit to the European campaign. Mistakes brought about by dual authority, by an inadequate system of briefing, would be avoided. The methods used were much the same as in the previous campaign: the use of small combat camera teams attached to formations as necessary, working under their P. and P.W. officers, very mobile, able to tie on to any formation that looked as if it were doing something interesting and record what was going on; the use of special coverage units, briefed from a higher organisation, such as SHAEF, the War Office or the War Department, to secure broader and more organised footage on particular subjects; free use of newsreel photographers to shoot as and how they pleased, to satisfy their own particular requirements.

U.S. Cameramen

From the beginning, the scene was dominated by the vast numbers of American service cameramen sent into the field. After the admittedly poor results achieved in North Africa, the Americans turned to the statistical, or herring-spawn, method. The idea was that every formation from army group downwards should have a given degree of coverage, ensured by the attachment of a given camera force to operate within the area of that particular formation. With a certain amount of reshuffling, this system held from D-day to VE-day. There is no doubt that it yielded results. The U.S. War Department now possesses an unsurpassed record of its army's activities in Europe. There is a certain scientific basis for the method, too; since the shooting of combat action is largely a matter of chance, and 400 cameramen have a better chance of securing the unique, symbolic shot of war than a handful. In the event, at least 3½ million feet of the total was turned by American service and newsreel cameramen. In terms of efficiency the story is not so good. Even from the point of view of historical record, which has a very wide frame of reference, a large amount of this footage was waste, or unnecessary duplication. But, as was so often heard "what's a couple of million feet of wasted film when there's a war on, and history being irrevocably made? Hollywood shoots a million feet on a small B production" . . . etc. The answer no doubt is that in war there are few opportunities for retakes, and a cameraman shooting unnecessarily is missing something important somewhere else.

Small British Camera Force

The British had a very small camera force, and it had to be constantly deployed, using great mobility and a high degree of contact with its briefing authorities. Technically, it suffered in the early days from camera trouble, and although this mended with experience, the small number of cameras available was never able even to attempt a broad full picture of the British part in the operation. Also, cameramen seemed starved of film, and undershot their stories. The technical quality was never high. It reached peaks touched by the best, but never reached the general standard of the U.S. service cameramen, who also had a prolonged groggy start. The war's operations were covered thinly, and for immediate purposes, such as newsreel and topical film use, adequately. But the War Office does not possess the complete record it might have had of the British Army's contribution. In particular it suffered from an almost complete blackout on its rear echelon. There just weren't enough cameras to shoot the great number of important subjects that the army left in its wake.

Many other small units were in the field. The Canadians had a tiny force, and were content largely to provide hometown pictures of their troops—on leave, playing football, giving Christmas parties to the kids, parading and whatnot. They were starved of cameras and directorial ability. This is a matter for surprise, when one considers that under Grierson a group of documentary directors had been trained in Canada, who might well have been permitted to come to Europe and use their talents to record the work of their own army.

The Air Forces

The Air Force stuff was of course superb, the best work being done by the U.S. 8th Air Force with its remarkable wing camera material of strafiing. The R.A.F. and the U.S. 9th Air Force continued the work we were familiar with before D-day—high-level daylight bombing, and of course in the case of the R.A.F. the wonderful night mass bombing material. The R.A.F. developed to a remarkable pitch its technique of photographing night bombing.

The Navies naturally started with a good flow of material, but this petered out after the initial phases were over. It was never of very high quality, but here the statistical chance of being on the right ship at the right time defeated the relatively small camera force involved.

European Camera Crews

The Dutch, in the persons of Wassenberg, Ferno and Out, turned in a fine documentary coverage of the condition of their devastated land during and after the fighting. The Norwegians made the finest and most dashing coverage of a commando operation—the Walcheren landings. The French Army, coming late in the day, did poorly, with few and ill-trained cameramen. The Poles, briefly and sporadically, sent in some amazing stuff, particularly on the first action of its armoured division, but did not sustain this level. The Czechs tried a full-length documentary in 16 mm. colour of its holding operation at Dunkirk, but achieved nothing to justify the use of this technique.

The Special Coverage Units operating directly under SHAEF, but responsible to various allied government departments and services, were mainly concerned in showing various aspects of civilian life in liberated territories, and the activities of civil affairs and military government authorities.

SIGHT and SOUND

A cultural Quarterly

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

appraising educational and entertainment values

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EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN

Their work did not justify the first rate facilities and opportunities they disposed of. In the case of the Americans, the directorial ability seemed drawn largely from Hollywood sources, and was not adapted to the type of shooting involved. Reed and Roffman did some fine work for the Canadian National Film Board, but not for long.

Where was Documentary ?

And where were the British documentary directors? The sad fact must be recorded that, with all its wealth of talent, a trained and fully equipped personnel which no other country can boast, the British documentary movement failed—as an independently operating organisation—to show much sign that it existed at all. Ralph Elton, Jack Lee and a few others, paid short visits to the continent, seemed to find things too much for them, and came back. The responsibility cannot be laid at their door. Roy Boulting, of the Army Film Unit, operating under precisely the same conditions, shared their ill-success. An inquest into the reasons for this failure cannot find space in this article. Those who did participate have been discreetly silent. Till further evidence is available, an open verdict is hereby recorded.

Brilliant Work

The most impressive work done by the newsreel cameramen was achieved when the liberation of Paris also liberated the talents of the brothers Mejato and Gaston Madru. This astonishing trio were snapped up by the U.S. newsreel companies, and proceeded to do the most consistently brilliant work of any individual cameramen in the campaign. Madru, who filmed in the last days of occupied Paris from a camera concealed in a carrier basket on a bicycle, and was killed by a sniper's bullet in the street fighting in Leipzig, deserves a memorial plaque on the wall of every newsreel association in the world. The other newsreel cameramen were not enterprising, and in comparison with the sustained brilliance of the three Frenchmen, paltry. They shot for the newsreels, instead of for the record. They are not used to giving a rounded story, but just a few, frequently well-chosen, shots. The Americans were better than the English—Lieb's work with Patton's army and in Paris was excellent.

In the final analysis, planning and numbers were lesser factors than individual ability. The most detailed planning was given to the coverage of the D-day phase, and this certainly resulted in a splendid and historic achievement, the highlight of which was the automatic coverage taken by the cameras attached to some of the landing craft—the 300 ft. which survived. But when the operation went out of the planned stage and became as it were hand-to-mouth, the coverage dropped at once in quality. From then on, the watchers of the Davies Street screen came to recognise a few names as being associated with good work, some few dozen service cameramen who had profited by their training in Astoria or Pinewood, and who, left on their own with a minimum of briefing, would turn in footage of value. The moral is surely, that, assuming as it can be assumed, that the training of these service recruits was of a high standard, more care should have been taken in selection of eligible trainees. In general, it can be said that British service cameramen showed a strongly developed directorial and pictorial sense most often lacking in their U.S. counterparts, but this was very much off-set by far weaker technical ability.

SHAEF tried hard

SHAEF made an honest attempt to envision the total picture of coverage, but had not the power to put its vision into practice. As before, after the undoubted achievements of D-day, SHAEF fell back into its legal rôle of adviser and provider of facilities. The story of previous campaigns was retold. Many authorities meant lack of central control. Individual services had facilities and authorisation from SHAEF, and had to submit to SHAEF censorship. In between, they were under the control, the rigid and jealously guarded control, of the War Department, War Office, Army Groups, Government Departments, and such institutions as the Signal Corps, etc. SHAEF which might have played on the whole instrument as a conductor with an orchestra, was too high up, remote, and tactful to display its full powers. Inasmuch as SHAEF was the first authority to see all the footage, it was in a position to send out to the field a picture of the overall coverage, to comment and advise on gaps, over-shooting, quality, and so forth. Such directives were sometimes used, in most cases disregarded. SHAEF could not know the local difficulties, often all-important. Units were too close to their own problems, and anxious to satisfy their immediate masters, who could hand out penalties as well as worthwhile rewards.

Inadequate ?

The use of this wealth of material, which cost so much pains and so many lives, can only be described as miserably inadequate. The newsreels, with two 700-ft. issues a week, only part of which could be devoted to the fighting on the Western Front, accounted at a generous estimate for about 50,000 ft. or less than 1 per cent. Other films made can be counted on the fingers of one hand. *Left of the Line* and *A Harbour goes to France* were timely and good. By the time of writing *The True Glory* has not yet been seen. And of course there was wide use of the material for specialist purposes, overseas reels, training and industrial morale films, etc. But the public was deprived by commercial, and, be it said, diplomatic considerations, from the running pictorial record of the war to which it has a right, and which by all the tokens, it had an intense desire to see. A great mistake in the opinion of the writer was made when the decision was reached to make one film of the whole campaign.

What might have been

Circumstances merited a series of great films depicting succeeding phases of the campaign. Anyone can sketch these out for himself: prelude to D-day and the initial landings; the Normandy Campaign up to the taking of Cherbourg; the clearing of Brittany and the swoop on Paris; Caen, the Boscages, and the Falaise gap; the Seine crossings and the liberation of Brussels; Arnhem; the liberation of Alsace-Lorraine; the Channel Ports; the Ardennes counter-offensive; the battle of the Roer; the battle of the Rhine and the final collapse. It's all there, in detail, in 5½ million feet of film. And now it's all dead as mutton. One reason, apart from the usual political difficulties of making joint films, is a perfection complex on the part of those using the film, which seemed to hamstring any attempt to finish films before their topicality lapsed. Crudities should have been unimportant. The great thing was to get the stuff on the world's screens—a technique would have developed as we went along.

Treasure-trove for Editors

Well, there it all is, in a myriad of cans in Washington, New York, London, Paris, a fine record and a treasure-trove for future users. What will happen to all the film-millions of feet which the public will never see, but millions also which will be called on in the years to come, to remind us of our madness and greatness? The hearts of future editors, who will have the task of securing the one shot they need out of the ocean of celluloid, need not drop, for there is a word of cheer. For the first time, a comprehensive documentation was undertaken, as the film came in, using the opportunities provided by central screening. As a result, the work of researching into the film records of the European fighting will be immeasurably lightened. Anyone who wants film taken of a particular town, type of action, subject, person, can find it in the catalogues and indices which SHAEF prepared. Private records of the quality of the material exist, and remain private. This at least SHAEF has done for the eventual users of the film. What could it not have done for the makers!

Documentary News Letter

Editorial Board

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NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Your Children's Eyes. Realist F.U. for M.O.I. *Producer:* John Taylor. *Direction:* Alex Strasser. C.F.L. 19 mins.
Subject: The care of children's eyes. A film for parents.
Treatment: The film falls into three parts—physiology of the eye; how the eye works and causes of long and short sight; diseases of the eye. The physiology of the eye is most ingeniously demonstrated by using an orange as a model, whose function and analogy to the eye are interpreted by a conjurer. Indeed, the effect, completely successful, is so purely of the cinema that it is difficult to describe. Long and short sight are explained, by blackboard drawings, set out by a schoolmaster who is shown taking a class. Though the treatment here is more conventional, the very roughness of the chalk drawing with the intentness of the child audience, compels concentration on the part of those watching the film. The last part of the film, sensitively made though it is, seems dull in comparison with the scenes which precede it.
Propaganda Effect: The film perhaps attempts too much, and the novelty of the opening scenes inevitably tends to kill the effect of the later scenes. Even so, the film is a most striking one, and we hope the technique it displays will be extended and developed in other health films. The first part, if detached from the rest, might be converted into an excellent elementary physiology teaching film for children.

A Mamprusi Village. M.O.I. *Direction:* John Page. C.F.L. 19 mins.
Subject: Village life in West Africa.
Treatment: The film resolutely shoulders the white man's burden. The coloured men are shown as gay, childlike, amiable, irresponsible, happy and carefree—just simple noble savages. As for diseases or hunger, well, they're too much like children to notice such things. Perhaps they are thankful to their masters and die; or perhaps they are never diseased or hungry: one simply is not told. However, within its terms of reference, which evidently excluded any treatment of anything save the innocuous, the film is pleasant and informative enough. The characters are sympathetically handled; something of their legal system is demonstrated; self government under the chiefs is said to be going to lead to full self government one day; it is explained that the chiefs are no longer allowed to rob their followers.
Propaganda Effect: If shown to children, this film will convince them that coloured people are totally different from white people, for it is not explained that many of the differences are superficial, and the outcome of climate or locality, or that many of our customs seem just as peculiar to coloured people as theirs do to us. The film will cut no ice in America, for it will merely confirm the views of the anti-negroes, and look like evasiveness to the others. Think again, M.O.I. Think again, Colonial Office.

The Story of Money. *Production:* Gryphon Films for Banking Information Service. *Direction:* Charles De Lautour. *Camera:* Charles Marlborough. *Producer:* Donald Taylor. C.F.L. 12 mins.
Subject: How modern currencies, banking and the cheque system have been evolved from primitive barter tokens.
Treatment: The film traces the evolution of the coin, the cheque and the modern bank with all its complex ramifications by means of a number of ingenious sequences of prints, museum specimens and actuality scenes. The treatment is in the style of *The Story of the Wheel* an early documentary which substituted simplicity and imagination for the ponderous historical treatment ordinarily accorded to such subjects. Both films remind us how much a good cameraman can achieve with how little; and that the atmosphere of a distant period in history can be as easily achieved by a close-up of hands moving some beautifully time-worn object as by all the costumes which line the shelves of Messrs. Nathans.
The film explains in clear, simple terms the manner in which the modern cheque book has developed from the early Promissory Note and Bill of Exchange. We see some of the ingenuities and complexities of the Clearing House and the Mint.
Propaganda Value: This is a useful educational film which wisely refrains from covering more than its own selected corner of the field of economics. There is a time when one fears that an unsophisticated audience may be sent away with an inflated view of the power and importance of money as such, but the educational balance is restored in the nick of time by a salutary reminder that money is an economic means rather than an economic end.

Soil Erosion. Information Films of India. *Direction:* Kenneth Villiers. *Camera:* Jinaraja Bodhye. *Production:* Ezra Mir. CFL 10 minutes.
Subject: Soil erosion in India, its causes and its cure.
Treatment: A brief pictorial survey of what soil erosion looks like opens the film, which goes on to illustrate its causes and its effect on peasant life. Then we see how it can be combated or avoided. The approach is simple and direct but the film would have made its points more clearly if there had not been so many changes of visual. The shots themselves were good but there was a tendency to try and cram too many of them in. Timing was the main fault of this extremely interesting film—a little less commentary, fewer shots held for a longer time, would have improved it enormously.
It was rather a large subject for one reel and it would perhaps have been better done in two parts of a reel each. But as one so seldom wants to see more of a film this criticism is in itself a sign that the film was good.
Propaganda Value: Soil erosion is a world problem. This film does a good job by putting India into the world picture.

★ For your information

IN every progressive enterprise there must be leaders and those who follow behind. As artistic and technical progress in kinematography quickens to the tempo and stimulus of war, "KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY" is always to be found "up-with-the-leaders", its well-informed pages radiating perception and far-sighted thinking. Kinematography's leaders themselves know this for truth and turn to "K.W." week by week for information and enlightenment.

Kinematograph WEEKLY

★

93 LONG ACRE
LONDON W.C.2

The Movement of the Tongue in Speech. *Production:* Realist F.U. for I.C.I. *Slow-motion Photography:* Kodak Research Laboratory. *Adviser:* D. B. Fry. 13 minutes.
Reviewed by Sir Richard Paget, F.P.S., F.I.P.

Subject: Movements of the human tongue and lips during speech as seen in a male patient with part of his right cheek removed by a surgical operation. Technicolor shots at normal speed are associated with black and white shots of the same action, speeded up 40 times.

Treatment: A somewhat gruesome film, but of great technical interest. The first instance (it is believed) in which the actual movements of the tongue have been made visible. Only the more forward movement can be seen, as the portion of the patient's cheek which has been removed only extends a little over one inch from the corner of his mouth. But many points of interest to students of phonetics and articulation are disclosed. Thus the backward curvature of the tongue in forming the English I, and the withdrawal of the tongue as a whole to form the backward closures (K. G. and ng) can be actually seen, though the final closure and release are hidden.

The longitudinal growing of the tongue in articulating sh is made visible, as also the "pantomimic" upward and downward movement of the tongue in articulating the word "high". Slow motion pictures of some of the words articulated are also shown. In each case the voice of the commentator is heard giving the words which the patient then repeats after him.

Propaganda Value: For instructional purposes it would be of advantage if the film could be supplemented by a short preliminary statement, together with a cartoon film showing a complete vertical section of a mouth and throat (as seen from the right) so that the relation between the movements actually shown in the film and the various accompanying movements (not visible) might be made clear.

The importance of good articulation needs to be stressed in all teaching of English speech. This film is a notable achievement, and should be the forerunner of a series of cartoon films derived from X-ray and other observations, showing the movements of articulation and the gestural relationship between the short words in English (and indeed in all languages) and the fundamental meanings which they convey.

TALES FOR CHILDREN

Five Films for Odeon Children's Clubs reviewed

RECENTLY a programme of five experimental films for children was shown to an adult audience. These films, made for the Odeon Children's Clubs, are described as entertainment, not education, and are produced by J. A. Rank's Advisory Council on Children's Entertainment films, in collaboration with the children's Film Department of G.B.I.

These are entertainment films of a peculiar kind. Two out of the five would be better described as moral lectures and two more have a moral tagged on. The adults were told by Miss Mary Field that they might not like all the films, but that did not matter, because the children did. This programme suggests, however, that it is high time that adults, particularly teachers, considered not only whether there is any point in making such films for children, but whether they are not positively harmful.

Tom's Ride produced by G.B.I. is intended "to point out that stealing by finding is as bad as any other kind of theft". Tom's people, the story says, cannot afford bicycles both for Tom and his younger sister, so the sister has one. Tom is jealous and when he finds a full note case, is tempted to buy a bicycle with the money. He is persuaded by his sister that it would be wicked, so hands the note case into a police station. They discover that it belongs to an old lady who is going to town to visit her wounded son. Tom borrows his sister's bicycle and gets the money to the old lady just as she discovers her loss at the booking office. She offers Tom a tip but he says "really I couldn't take it for doing so little". When he gets home his father gives him a talking to and points out that he would not have enjoyed riding a bicycle bought with the old lady's money.

Certainly children must learn not to steal. But surely things like that can only be taught to children by people they respect and in terms of their own experience and surroundings. They would hardly respect the adults in this film. The situation represented in *Tom's Ride* appears to be quite unreal. Tom's people are shown as living in a comfortable middle-class house. It looks as if they could afford a second bicycle anyway. Or if they had any common sense, having given a bicycle to the younger child, they would have found some other outlet for Tom's energies. Tom and his sister are unnatural, priggish children. "What normal child would refuse a reward," said a teacher in the audience.

The children who see these films are encouraged to write their view to the cinema manager, Judging by some of their criticisms, which were read out as an introduction to the film, they were reacting against the unreal atmosphere of the film. "The sister wouldn't have had a bicycle unless she had further to go to school than her brother," was a comment.

Sports Day produced by G.B. Screen Services goes one further in moral uplift, priggishness and snob appeal. Here the main moral is, don't tell tales about your friends, with a subsidiary moral about being kind to animals. Colonel and Mrs. House, who live in a big fine house, have a little dog. Two boys at the nearby secondary-cum-public school tie a tin on its tail on the way to school. The hero releases it but is wrongly accused by the schoolmaster and Colonel House of being the culprit. He shields the other boys and is prevented from taking part in the school sports. At the last minute, owing to the intervention of the hero's very pretty starlet sister, who proves to the colonel that he is innocent, Tom is allowed out just in time to win the swimming competition and the cup for his side.

So virtue is rewarded. But why is a good modern secondary school peopled with boys who appear to have come from one of the less well-known public schools, with parents to match? Why the Colonel and his large house and little dog? Why the sports-master who appears to have stepped straight out of an advertisement for blazers? Because, we were told, the producers wanted to show the children the best social background. Two of the children's criticisms were "Our homes aren't like that," and "Show us children like ourselves". Mary Field agreed that the child actors were too old and sophisticated, but pointed out that it was illegal to employ a child under twelve in a studio. Could there have been some sets left over from a feature film which suggested a cheap studio setting? For we believe there is nothing to prevent pictures being taken of ordinary children in their homes and at school if the L.E.A. agrees.

The best film in the programme was *Club Magazine No.* 3, produced by Wallace Productions. It included items on a visit to the penguins at the Zoo, wartime work of a village blacksmith, the children's art school in Moscow and an exhibition of toys at the Nursery School Association. Foreign versions of this magazine are being made. It does tell children something of the real world and it is proposed to include some aspect of life in another country in each issue—which is a good idea.

Sally the Sparrow produced by G.B.I. was made for the younger children and takes them on a visit to the Zoo. You can hardly go wrong with animals, but this film almost did. The producers thought the bigger animals should be introduced to young children who had never seen them in relation to the sparrow which they all know. We visit the animals with Sally, who flies into their cages to get food. The commentary, in verse, suggests that Sally shouldn't take other animals' food, but wait until she is fed by the children. This gives the sparrow a distorted humanised character. For if there is one bird who can successfully pinch crumbs from under the nose of the lion it is the sparrow. I thought the sparrow spoilt an otherwise useful film.

Finally there was a cartoon. The children ask for a cartoon in their programmes, preferably in colour. If that is the only reason for showing one, why not show them Disney or a Popeye instead of *Robbie Finds a Gun.* This slow black-and-white cartoon was produced by Analysis Films with drawings by Anson Dyer. Robbie the Rabbit gets into trouble when he exchanges his catapault for a gun, and ends up in a pond. A simple cautionary tale for the younger children.

The Advisory Council on Children's Entertainment films will no doubt improve on this first experimental selection. But whatever happens, even if the element of snob morality decreases in future productions, it is most important that teachers should see these films as a matter of course. For whether the children like them or not, it is an adult responsibility to decide whether they are doing a good job.

New Documentary Films

(*continued from p. 93*)

Time and Tide. Paul Rotha Productions for M.O.I. *Editing:* Jack Ellitt. C.F.L. 15 mins.

Bailey Bridge. Merlin Productions for M.O.I. *Direction:* Arthur Barnes. C.F.L. 11 mins.

Subjects: The design and application of the Bailey Bridge. Marine salvage.

Treatment: Films Division has made a practice since its beginning of commissioning simple films, each explaining some aspect of the war. By now there must be scores of them, and the units have not only kept up a high general standard of production, but usually manage to add some imaginative touch of exposition to each, which makes the difference between a humdrum job and a film of quality. *Bailey Bridge* and *Time and Tide* are not exceptions. The former contains an interview with Bailey, who demonstrates the principles of his invention with matchboxes. To see this is not only satisfying and amusing in itself, but one understands once and for all what the bridge is and why it has been important. The rest of the film, an almost too plainly photographed account of the process of erecting the bridge, gains correspondingly in interest. *Time and Tide* shows the raising and beaching of a small vessel sunk in harbour by the enemy. This time the process is explained with the help of homely and crude models of the simplest kind. They are used as one might use a salt cellar and pepper pot on the dinner table in order to explain a military manoeuvre. The effect is not only to interpret what might be obscure, but to enhance the effect of the other scenes which, in this case, are exceptionally well shot, though the action seems to have been covered insufficiently. However, gaps in continuity are neatly bridged in the editing, which is generally effective. The whole is busy, bustling, human and exciting.

Broken Dykes. M.O.I. and Netherlands Information Bureau. *Direction:* John Ferno. M.O.I. Theatrical release for August. 15 mins.

Subject: When the British captured Antwerp from the landward side, German batteries on the island of Walcheren still commanded the approach to the harbour, which could not be used until they had been dislodged. The R.A.F. breached the dykes by bombing. The island was flooded and the Germans forced to evacuate. The people and their animals were marooned and had to be rescued.

Treatment: John Ferno is surely one of the foremost documentary director-cameramen in the world. His photography in *The Four Hundred Million* and *Spanish Earth* will not be forgotten, and *Broken Dykes* is a worthy successor to these two famous films. It is a simple and closely observed account of the sufferings and fortitude of scores of Dutch families. The streets of their towns and villages have become sea-lanes requiring not only boats, but pilots who know the set of the current and the position of drowned land mines; the whole island has gone back to be at the bottom of the North Sea, and the houses are merely rocks sticking up. All this and much more Ferno has recorded in a film which will be remembered when lots of others will have been junked. It contains as sympathetically photographed scenes of people as have ever been taken, and the faces of the people are the faces which Rembrandt and Breugel saw and recorded.

Propaganda Effect: One can learn more about the sufferings of Europe from this film than from most of the newspaper accounts rolled together.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

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Agriculture and Consumer; Social Planning; Canada and the World at War; Education; 4 Film Catalogues published by the National Film Board of Canada. 1945.

Canada in Action. Film Discussion Notes Nos. 1, 2a, B *and* D. The Canadian Council of Education in Citizenship. 1942–45.

A Guide to Film Forums. National Film Board of Canada. 1945.

Labour's Film Forum. Vol. 2, No. 6. National Film Board of Canada. 1945.

How to Stage a Film Show. The National Film Society of Canada, 1942; reprinted in 1945.

The Arts in Canada and the Film. National Film Board of Canada. 1945.

Children of the City. British Information Services, New York. 1945.

The Fifth Year. British Information Services. New York. 1945.

THE WARMEST admirer of the M.O.I. Films Division could not give it much credit for the publications it has issued or inspired, for there have been none, except a dim booklet on *The Silent Village* and a pleasantly got up book of stills published some years ago. Judging by the luxurious style and the huge circulations of the books published under the auspices of the Publications Division of the M.O.I. lack of paper cannot be the reason for the silence of Films Division, and one is forced to conclude that Films Division is uninterested. Yet surely it is the duty of a department, spending tens of thousands of pounds each year on producing good non-theatrical films and on running an efficient and far-reaching service of mobile projectors, to spend a few hundreds on printing and circulating material to help the public make the best possible use of the services available?

Apart from anything else, it is astonishing that Films Division, which has to its credit one of the most imaginative and important non-theatrical film schemes in the world, should be so inarticulate about its own most notable achievement. Here is something of interest to every educator, administrator, Local Government Official, Welfare Worker, parson and Trade Union Official in the country, let alone hundreds of thousands of citizens in every walk of life. Yet so far as we know, Films Division has never published a single considered statement about the theory and practice of non-theatrical as it affects every man, woman and child in the country. All we get is, year by year, a mimeographed press statement consisting only of statistics set out in the driest possible way. Films Division has its own press office but rarely do the press have an opportunity of learning about non-theatrical programmes.

Is Films Division above learning from the excellent Canadian pamphlets listed above, or even from the excellent pamphlets put out by its own offices in New York? For non-theatrical requires more than the enthusiasm of its regional film officers and the silent loyalty of the growing band of 23,000,000 people who attend its films each year. Films—for all the enthusiasm of 23,000,000 people—are not deposited on people's doormats like a newspaper. Their efficient and economical use requires, at least, attractive subject catalogues and discussion notes.

The Canadian subject catalogues, each with a distinctive cover of its own, are pleasant to the eye. Inside, the pages are well laid out with succinct synopses. But the most interesting set of publications are those for "film forums" or discussion groups. The *Canada in Action* series discuss one, two or more films in each issue. Each film is analysed; there are maps when necessary; notes on what to look for in each film are supplied; there is a list of suggested topics for discussion, with a bibliography. The organisers of the films forums are invited to fill up a questionnaire in which they can express their opinions on the visual background material accompanying the films. To support the whole scheme, the National Film Board has issued *A Guide to Film Forums* suggesting ways of organising them, and urging everyone to "make motion pictures the centre for your club or community activities". *Labour's Film Forum* is a publication issued monthly for Trade Unions and Labour Groups. *How to Stage a Film Show* consists of practical hints on 16 mm. projection and showmanship.

The Canadian pamphlets listed above not only suggest a penetrating sense of the public use of film which appears to be beyond the grasp of Films Division; they also illustrate the diversity of films now being made in Canada. The finely printed *The Arts in Canada and the Film* describes and illustrates films on traditional songs of Quebec, folk music and handicrafts, Canadian landscape painting and Chinese Art. Coloured illustrations show stills from Norman McClaren's fantasies, development of the technique he invented in *Love on the Wing* made for the British G.P.O. in 1937. We learn, too, that Alexieff, creator of the celebrated *Night on the Bare Mountain* is now working in Canada.

Comparable with the Canadian discussion notes is *Children of the City* issued by the British Library of Information in New York to support the distribution in America of the film of the same title. It is excellently got up, well illustrated, with a last page of "discussion points". Why has not this booklet been issued in Britain? Or are our own problems too unimportant to present to our own people?

The Fifth Year by the British Library of Information consists of a collection of verse by leading British poets on various aspects of the war, illustrated by stills from M.O.I. films.

Though Films Division has so far ignored, even disdained the creating of a public conversant with the theory and practice of non-theatrical, and it has hampered its own work for lack of active, articulate and critical audience groups, kept supplied with discussion notes and questionnaires, it is still not too late to begin. Can a start be made forthwith?

Film Societies

The London Scientific Film Society has been using a questionnaire system for its last two seasons to try to determine the audience's opinion of one film in each programme presented. This season's results are now being analysed and collated with those of other Scientific Film Societies who also took part in the scheme—about 3,000 people in all.

A standardised form is issued to each person entering the cinema. It contains a number of questions, and a series of alternative answers to each question. During the interval the audience is asked to fill in the questionnaire about the film it has just seen, by underlining what is considered the most appropriate reply to each question. The forms are then collected, the replies entered on a chart, and a percentaged summary made out.

The analysis of last season's results is now being prepared for publishing, and plans for next season are in hand. It is possible that a radically different type of questionnaire may be used with films specially made to get answers to questions on the subjective impact of film techniques. If any documentary producers or directors have questions of this kind, to which a useful answer might be obtained from audiences such as those of scientific film societies, they are invited to communicate with the Audience Reaction Committee, London Scientific Film Society, c/o Academy Cinema, 165 Oxford Street, W.1.

At a show on June 8th, Leeds Scientific Film Society heard an address by Sir Robert Watson-Watt, C.B., F.R.S., and saw the film supervised by him, *Water in the Air*. Other films shown were *Harbour goes to France*, *Soil Erosion*, *Chemistry of Fire* and *Children's Charter*.

Correspondence

SIR,

Your valuable leading article on "The Future of the Educational Film" contains one suggestion which we wish to question. In discussing the production of specialised films you say " . . . the National Film Office should be able, in commissioning films and film strips on behalf of the Ministry of Education as well as for other Departments, to effect more economical, efficient and rapid production for all by using the same companies for subjects related in style, treatment, subject and locale." In reviewing the subject a year ago we considered this idea in relation to medical films, and suggested that film units should "not confine themselves exclusively to medicine, but by taking out occasionally into the general run of films some of the precision they have learnt in medicine they will contribute to the general trend of film-making and bring advances back with them into medical films". We feel that the increasing specialisation which could be forced, with the best of intentions, on a film unit, if the proposal you suggest were carried out, would lead in the end to worse and not better films, for the reason discussed by your contributor Harry Randall in "The Creative Force" in the same issue.

Royal Society of Medicine,
1 Wimpole Street,
London, W.1.
27th July, 1945.

CEDRIC LONGLAND
RONALD MACKEITH
BRIAN STANFORD

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REALIST FILM UNIT LIMITED

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OUR COUNTRY

Excerpts from the commentary, written by Dylan Thomas, and reproduced by courtesy of the Ministry of Information

Glasgow

To begin with
a city
a fair grey day
a day as lively and noisy as a close gossip of sparrows
as terribly impersonal as a sea cavern full of machines
when morning is driving down from the roofs of
buildings
into stone labyrinths and traffic webs
when each man is alone forever in the midst of the
masses of men
and all the separate movements of the morning crowds

London

are lost together in the heartbeat of the clocks
a day when the long noise of the sea is forgotten
street-drowned in another memory
of the sound itself of smoke and sailing dust
trumpets of traffic signs and hoardings and posters
rasp of the red and green signal lights
the scraped string voices of overhead wires
and the owl sound of the dry wind in the tube tunnels
the blare and ragged drumroll of the armies of
pavements and chimneys
and crossings and street walls
the riding choirs of the wheels
the always to be remembered even through continual
sea music
music of the towers and bridges and spires and domes
of the island city.

St. Paul's

There is peace under one roof.
And then birds flying
suddenly easily as though from another country.
And all the stones remember and sing
the cathedral of each blitzed dead body that lay or lies
in the bomber-and-dove-flown-over cemeteries
of the dumb heroic streets.
And the eyes of St. Paul's move over London:
To the crowds of the shunting flagged and whistling clut-
tered cave-hollow other world under glass and steam
the loudspeaking terminus.

* * *

Going out
out over the racing rails in a grumble of London-
leaving thunder
over the maze track of metal
through a wink and a spin of towns and signals and
fields
out
to the edges of the explosive the moon-moved man-
indifferent capsizing sea.

* * *

Felling Trees

Here near at one island end, the north fringe,
walk deep through the forbidding timber temples
count the Samson pillars fall
the thwacks of the wood-and-wind-splintering axe
crack of the trunk-shorn boughs
shuffle of leaves
the suddenly homeless birds' tree-call.
Forget for a second the beckoning sea
that lies at the end of the journey,
commanding your coming back
behind each fated tree.

Aberdeen

To end with
a quayside
a fair grey day
with the long noise of the sea flowing back
as though never in factory or harvestfield
market or timber temple street or hill
it could have been forgotten
for a moment of the tidal movement of man's time
with the call of ships
the monotonous sea voice of the beautiful scavenging
gull
the salt smell strong as sunlight
grease on the deck
the facing of the sea.
To end with
the faces of fishermen.

* * *

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF FILMS PRODUCED BY THE M.O.I. IN 1944.

FOOTAGE OF FILMS

	1940(a)	1941	1942	1943	1944	TOTAL
5-Minute	13,791	25,113	20,141	—	—	59,045
15-Minute	—	—	1,316	15,216	16,041	32,573
General T. Distribution	16,673	9,228	22,506	33,833	17,524	99,764
General N.T. Distribution	23,545	7,890	41,457	24,010	39,572	136,474
Instructional and Training	4,109	10,280	30,522	38,568	18,713	102,192
Mainly Overseas	—	—	16,383	15,081	5,908	37,372
Wholly Overseas	3,100	11,093	22,944	43,155	17,307	97,599
Trailers	1,600	3,000(b)	4,250	5,750(c)	5,500(c)(f)	20,100
TOTAL	62,818	66,604	159,519	175,613	120,565	585,119
Colonial Film Unit Productions	11,919	7,836	13,600(d)	30,198(d)	17,844(d)	81,397
Acquired 5-Minute and 15-Minute films	1,135	6,657	11,353	1,312(e)	—	20,457

(a) Includes 3,130 ft. of T. releases delivered in 1939.
(b) Average length—200 ft.
(c) Average length—125 ft.
(d) 16 mm. productions are calculated at equivalent 35 mm. footage.
(e) 15-minute film.
(f) Excludes three re-issues. Includes 3 issues in Scotland only, and 3 issues in England and Wales only.

NUMBERS OF FILMS

	1940(a)	1941	1942	1943	1944	TOTAL
5-Minute	20	37	29	—	—	86
15-Minute	—	—	1	12	12	25
General T. Distribution	14	5	7	8	5	39
General N.T. Distribution	23	7	35	21	28	114
Instructional and Training	6	12	24	27	13	82
Mainly Overseas	—	—	12	7	6	25
Wholly Overseas	3	10	18	39	15	85
Trailers	8	15	34	46	51(b)	154
TOTAL	74	86	160	160	130	610
Colonial Film Unit Productions	8	10	16	30	36	100
Acquired 5-minute and 15-minute films	2	10	17	1(c)	—	30

(a) Includes two films for T. release delivered in 1939.
(b) Excludes three re-issues, includes three issues in Scotland only, and three issues in England and Wales only.
(c) 15-minute film.